

MARINE SAFETY MANUAL

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CHAPTER 6: TRAVELING EXAMINATION TEAMS

A. Background.

When the seventeen Regional Examination Centers (RECs) were established in 1982, the use of Traveling Examination Teams (TETs) was offered as a means to lessen the impact on mariners who live and work in areas remote from the RECs. Subsequent budgetary constraints in the mid-80's caused a substantial reduction in the use of TETs, and a reduction of services provided to marine industry personnel. The Coast Guard Authorization Act of 1986 provided a solution to this problem by authorizing the marine industry to reimburse the Coast Guard for travel and subsistence expenses incurred in administering examinations at remote locations (46 U.S.C. 7504).

B. Mission Performance Standard.

The minimum mission performance standards listed below are established for serving license or document applicants in remote areas. It is recognized that limited personnel resources and scheduling considerations may prevent the fulfillment of these standards.

1. Number Of Trips.

A TET is appropriate whenever a group of at least 20 applicants in one remote area has been determined to be fully qualified for examination. If there are enough qualified applicants, one TET trip will be made monthly to each remote area. Applicants must be determined to be qualified sufficiently before the scheduled trip to allow for the routine administration of the program (normally 7 to 10 days).

2. Testing Of Non-Students.

TET sponsors must provide non-students access to the examination. The sponsor will be permitted to pass on a reasonable portion of exam specific expenses to these examinees.

3. Dual Purpose Travel.

The TET funding mechanism is currently the only available option due to statutory authority, Coast Guard budgetary restrictions, and a desire to treat all mariners equitably. One result of requiring reimbursement is that individuals from remote areas are discouraged from seeking the required licenses. RECs should use any innovative means to reduce the need for reimbursable expenditures such as dual purpose travel.

EXAMPLE: Administer examinations during a vessel inspection trip.

4. Remote Area.

A remote area is one that is more than 150 miles from the nearest REC or the site of another TET visit. OCMI discretion allows for TETs to be dispatched to locations within the 150 mile radius dependent upon personnel resources at the REC.

5. Use Of Coast Guard Auxiliary Personnel.

To augment existing REC personnel, members of the Coast Guard Auxiliary are authorized to examine applicants at the discretion of the local OCMI.

6. Discretion Of The OCMI.

Additional TET trips (including foreign TET trips) may be scheduled at the discretion of the Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection (OCMI).

C. Reimbursement.

Except for trips made to the schools receiving federal aid under 46 CFR Part 310 for the examination of students as required by 46 CFR 310.3(b)(2), or those examined at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, all TET trips will be conducted on a reimbursable basis.

D. Administration.

The following procedures will apply to all TET trips, except as provided for in paragraph 6.C.

1. Travel Order Number (TONO).

When a TET trip is warranted, RECs shall forward a request for a TONO(s) and accounting data to NMC-4C. This request should be made by E-Mail or telefax. If the TET trip is approved, a TONO(s) will be issued by NMC-4C.

2. Letter Of Undertaking (LOU).

A single billing source must be provided for each group of applicants. This source may be an individual, organization, or company who agrees to reimburse the Coast Guard. This individual, organization, or company shall submit a LOU that must be received by the REC before the commencement of any travel. The LOU shall contain the following information (a sample response to requests for TET services and a sample LOU are shown in Figures 6-1 and 6-2):

- a. An agreement to reimburse the Coast Guard for all travel and per diem costs incurred in providing the TET services;
- b. The name and address of the individual, company, or organization to be billed; and
- c. An agreement to provide adequate testing facilities for the applicants to be tested. This may be waived if the OCMI will provide the space.

3. Travel Log.

A travel log shall be maintained for each TET trip. If two or more groups are tested on the same trip, the completed log must reflect how the total chargeable expenses should be prorated among the groups (See Figure 6-3). Travel logs should be retained at the REC.

4. Billing.

To facilitate billing for the TET trip, the following material shall be submitted to NMC-4C upon completion of the trip:

- a. Letter(s) of undertaking;
- b. Copy of travel orders (CG-4251);
- c. Copy of travel voucher or subvoucher (DD 1351-2); and
- d. Copy of travel summary of expenses from HRSIC.

E. Acceptance of In-Kind Travel and Travel-Related Expenses.

The acceptance of company or applicant supplied meals, transportation, or lodging is prohibited, unless no other arrangements (e.g., for reimbursement in accordance with 46 U.S.C. 7504 and the procedures set forth in paragraph 6.D. of this Volume) can be made; and the acceptance of such expenses complies with the requirements of the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch, 5 CFR 2635. If it is necessary to accept in-kind and travel-related expenses, prior approval shall be obtained from NMC-4C. Remember that the examination procedure is the only means available to the Coast Guard for determining an applicant's professional competence. Thus, the same vigilance used in the REC examination room must be maintained in external relationships with those requesting TET assistance.

FIGURE 6-1: SAMPLE RESPONSE TO TET REQUEST

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Dear Sir:

Title 46 United States Code 7504 authorizes the reimbursement of Coast Guard expenses incurred in conducting licensing and/or seaman documentation services at a location other than at the Regional Examination Center. That reimbursement is limited to travel and subsistence expenses.

Accordingly, before the service you have requested in your (letter) (telephone call) of _____ can be scheduled, this office must be assured that the Coast Guard will be reimbursed for the expenses incurred. This assurance may be provided by completing and signing the enclosed Letter of Undertaking and returning it to this office. The letter also certifies that you will provide adequate testing facilities for the requested service.

The following conditions must normally be met before a TET will be authorized:

1. There are at least 20 applicants whose applications have been evaluated and found to be qualified.
2. A TET trip will normally be provided only for locations in excess of 150 miles from this office or another TET site.
3. The completed application and supporting documents for each individual must be received by this office at least ten working days prior to the anticipated testing date.
4. Only individuals with previously approved applications will be examined.

Sincerely,

Encl: (1) Letter of Undertaking

FIGURE 6-2: SAMPLE LETTER OF UNDERTAKING (LOU)

(Date)

To: Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection

(REC zone)

LETTER OF UNDERTAKING

I agree to reimburse the U.S. Coast Guard for all travel and per diem costs incurred in conjunction with the Traveling Examination Team services performed at

_____ on _____.

I further understand that I must provide suitable testing facilities for these testing services.

(signature and title)

Name and Address:
(for billing)

Daytime telephone:

FIGURE 6-3: TET TRAVEL LOG

EXAMINER: _____ TONO: _____ DATES OF TRIP: _____

Applicant	Billing Address	Location of Visit	Number of Days	% of trip	Mileage	Meals/ Lodging